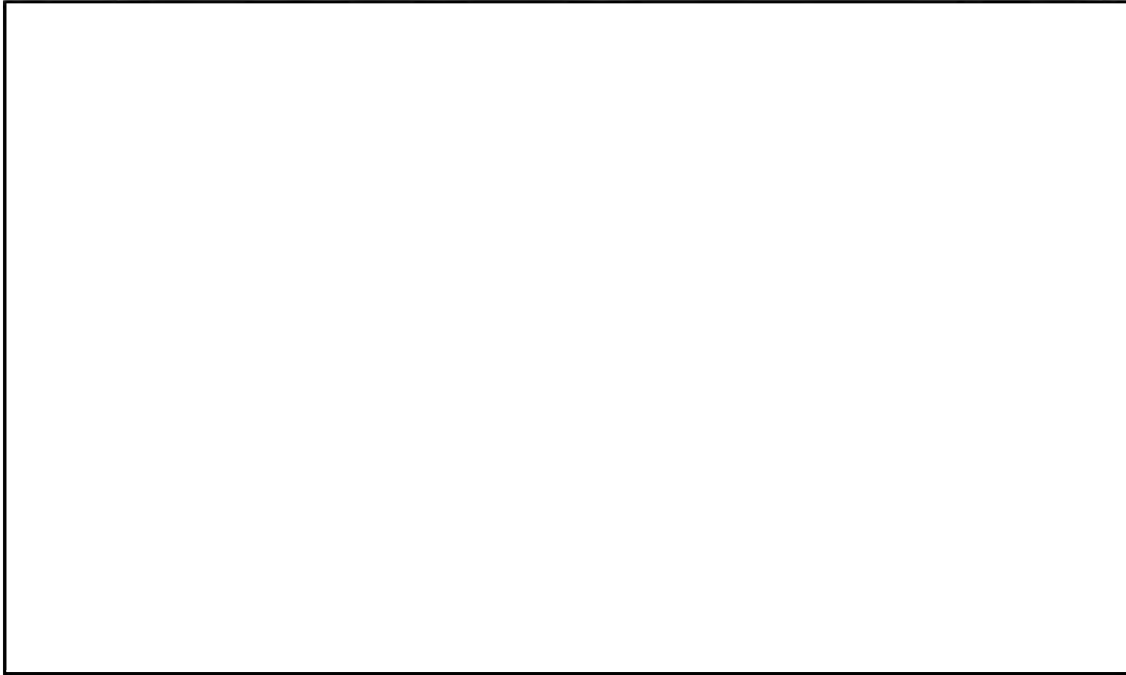


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5 January 1974

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: European Defense Cooperation,  
MBFR, and the Soviets

NOTE: *This memo, prepared in CIA, briefly assesses the stance of the West Europeans on MBFR and its relation to European defense cooperation. It then addresses Soviet attitudes toward the same question.*

1. The West European Posture: With the advent of MBFR negotiations, the question of future European defense cooperation has seized the members of the EC with some urgency. This question now seems likely to add considerably to the complications of the talks. During the first round of the negotiations, most of the EC members made it a point to emphasize to the Warsaw Pact participants that any possible agreements should not restrict the possibility of future ventures in European defense cooperation. Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Great Britain put so much emphasis on this point that the US delegation drew the conclusion that the EC participants were perhaps more interested in limiting the possible damage to West European interests than in achieving the goals of the MBFR negotiations.

2. In mid-December the EC participants provided the US delegation copies of a paper which spelled out precisely what they wish to avoid in MBFR. The paper had already been approved by the foreign ministries of Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands, West Germany, and Luxembourg, and, interestingly enough, France, which is not participating in the MBFR exercise. (The British presumably approved the paper later.)

3. In general, the EC paper recommended that possible MBFR agreements:

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- should not prejudice the already decided development of the European Community into a European Union;
- should avoid giving the Western area of reduction (West Germany and the Benelux) a special status that would hinder the unifying process; (that is, an agreement should not create a geographical area in which special arms control measures apply)
- and should not preclude the possibility that a future European Union might take over the implementation and verification of possible agreements.

In particular, the EC participants said they wished to avoid:

- the establishment of "ceilings" or "subceilings" for the national forces of the EC Nine;
- provisions which would limit movements of their armed forces;
- the designation of the armed forces of a country of the Nine stationed in another member country, such as the British Army on the Rhine, as "foreign forces."

4. Although the French have only posed questions and supplied no answers concerning what Paris describes as the need for an "increasingly distinct character of European defense," their recent sallies have piqued the interest of their European neighbors. Among these overtures have been Foreign Minister Jobert's recent hints that the Western European Union might serve as the forum for discussion and reflection of Europe's defense. These French balloons have stimulated the hope among the other Europeans that Paris may at long last be willing to make concessions to the eventual creation of an effective European defense organization.

5. The West Europeans' desire to preserve their defense options is a genuine one even though their individual motivations are complex. Bonn, London, Rome, and several other capitals fully accept the need for closer cooperation among themselves as a way of rationalizing their defense expenditures. They all see an eventual defense organization as a natural consequence of the European unity movement,

and they clearly expect that Europe will ultimately have to shoulder a larger share of the Atlantic defense burden. France to a considerable degree shares these views, but its motives in raising the European defense issue at this time are more ambiguous. Genuinely fearing the consequences of a US force reduction, Paris would not mind raising issues that could complicate the MBFR negotiations. Nor does Paris mind alluding to the alleged risk that in the course of the MBFR negotiations the US will make bilateral "deals" with Moscow that would further weaken the US security commitment.

6. It should be noted that no West European government has any firm blueprint for defense cooperation; each has different perspectives and fears; all are feeling the way. Much will depend on their perception of the evolving US role. In general, however, they are already disposed to think that the US will decide--or be forced--to cut its commitments in Europe, and they are very apprehensive lest this be done in ways, or at a pace, in which they are not given a true consultative role. Any US moves which pointed toward bilateral US-Soviet understandings on MBFR issues would add to these apprehensions; the more so since they are already sensitive about not being consulted in the recent Middle East crisis. MBFR will greatly affect vital European security interests and the allies would be particularly sensitive to anything suggesting they were being excluded. Their irritation would be the greater in light of recent US promises to consult more fully.

7. The Soviet View: While Soviet opposition to West European integration as such is of long standing, recent developments have had the effect of arousing Moscow. Over the past year or so Moscow has shown signs of learning to live with economic integration, but political integration makes it nervous and the fear of military integration is traceable at least back to the European Defense Community proposal of 1954 and perhaps to the Locarno agreement in 1925. Freely expressed Chinese support for improved West European defense capabilities has only added to these fears.

8. Soviet fears focus on the prospect that a West European defense grouping will have a nuclear capability and that West Germany will come to dominate that grouping. Even without nuclear weapons there is concern. [REDACTED]

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[redacted] a "school of thought" in the Soviet Union that believes a unified Western Europe will become increasingly aggressive, seek to regain control of East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia, but at the same time remain psychologically and ideologically pro-American and anti-Soviet. How widely this view is held we cannot say, but the fear of a German-dominated Western Europe is deeply engrained in the Soviet psyche.

9. Soviet behavior on MBFR may in fact owe much to this concern over the prospect of a European defense grouping. Moscow has not behaved as though it was urgently concerned with getting US forces out of Europe. In May 1971 Brezhnev publicly signalled an interest in negotiating force reductions, thereby helping to scuttle the Mansfield resolution at that time. Later, the agreement to open MBFR talks took some steam out of the demands for unilateral US troop withdrawals. Finally, the Soviet force reduction offer put forward at Vienna on 8 November seems aimed at avoiding a precipitate departure of US troops. It emphasizes the phased reduction of both stationed and national forces, and Soviet officials have made it clear in subsequent comments that reduction of West German armed forces is a primary Soviet concern.

10. There are obviously other reasons for the Soviet interest in force reduction--the linkage with CSCE, the prospect of weakening NATO, and even some marginal economic savings--but the possibility of heading off a European defense grouping may be near the top of the list. A breakdown in the talks that led to a unilateral US withdrawal and gave new impetus to the West European defense effort might well be regarded in Moscow as the worst of the possible outcomes. A phased withdrawal of US troops, accompanied by substantial reduction of European forces and accomplished in a climate of detente, might be regarded as the best. This gives Moscow an additional incentive to compromise to keep up the momentum of the talks.